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Soviet Aide Poses a Ticklish Problem for Waldheim

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UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Sept. 10 — The Soviet Union has presented Secretary General Kurt Waldheim with an awkward political problem, asking him to keep on his personal staff a high-ranking Russian in an apparent breach of United Nations rules.

The request was made on behalf of Viktor M. Lesiovsky, one of Mr. Waldheim's two special assistants. Under rules laid down by the General Assembly in 1978 all United Nations employees must retire at 60 years and 6 months unless they are language or technical specialists.

Mr. Lesiovsky's time expires on Jan. 4 and his contract runs out on Dec. 20. In a personal letter the Soviet chief delegate, Oleg A. Troyanovsky, asked Mr. Waldheim to extend Mr. Lesiovsky's contract for another year.

Mr. Lesiovsky is the subject of special interest because he has been identified as an officer of the Soviet Union's Committee on State Security, better known as the

K.G.B. Last year a Soviet defector from the United Nations, Arkady N. Shevchenko, said that a special assistant to Mr. Waldheim was a K.G.B. officer. Mr. Lesiovsky, the only Soviet citizen who is a Waldheim special assistant, has declined to discuss the issue.

Every Request Rejected

The Troyanovsky request poses a ticklish problem for the Secretary General. His personnel director, James C. Jonah, has begun a campaign to diminish the United Nations Secretariat's political influence and make it the independent international civil service called for in the world body's charter. Mr. Jonah said that since taking office in April 1979 he had rejected every request to extend any employment beyond the prescribed limit.

"We have had no exceptions to this," he said. "I have kept within the General Assembly resolution." Moreover, Mr. Jonah said, all his recommendations have been backed by Mr. Waldheim.

Mr. Jonah intends to turn down the Soviet request for Mr. Lesiovsky. But if

Mr. Waldheim supports his personnel chief he will antagonize one of the two major powers — the other is the United States — who can determine whether he will win an unprecedented third term as Secretary General. His current five-year term expires at the end of 1981.

No Other Request Is Cited

Mr. Waldheim suggested that there was nothing remarkable about the request, that United Nations delegates frequently asked him to extend the stay of some favored person. But he did not cite any other case where the request had been made in writing.

The Secretary General suggested that he was awaiting not only Mr. Jonah's recommendation but that of Mr. Jonah's superior, Helmut Debatin, Under Secretary General for Administration, Finance and Management. Mr. Jonah said that up to now his recommendations had routinely been passed along by Mr. Debatin to Mr. Waldheim. But Mr. Debatin could urge Mr. Lesiovsky's extension and thus ease Mr. Waldheim's problem.